

A CHINESE REMEDY FOR HYDROPHOBIA.

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SOME time ago I was told of a remedy for hydrophobia which was used by the natives in this part of China. It was said to be a secret in the sole possession of one family whose ancestral home is Tungchow Foo in the province of Shantung, and had been passed down from mother to daughter for the last 400 years. The last possessor of the secret had no daughters and revealed it to her youngest son who now lives in Wei-Hai-Wei. The remedy was said to consist of a powder made from a certain hard nut grown in the province which was softened by boiling in an earthenware pot, no kind of metal being allowed to touch it, then grated on the outside of the basin and reduced to a pulp, which was dried and put up in packets for future use, or at once administered to the sufferer who, if necessary, was tied down and the remedy forced down his throat. The patient was said to fall into a deep sleep, in which he sweated profusely and awoke cured. No money was taken in payment, the possessor of the secret trusting to gain merit in the next world after death. I was assured that cures were authentic; my informant, a Scotch lady, who had lived many years in China, had a Chinese servant who was bitten by a mad dog and was treated and recovered; a woman, bitten at the same time not treated died with all the symptoms of hydrophobia. My friend, at my request, very kindly managed to procure me an interview with the owner of the secret, who brought me his basin and three powders and three nuts. I was astonished to find that they were the seeds of a species of *strychnos*, probably *strychnos nux vomica*. The coarsely ground fibrous powders gave the tests, as far as I was able to carry them out, for strychnine. Each nut was about five-eighths of an inch across and weighed 19 grains. The powders weighed 14, 15, and 16 grains respectively. It would be interesting to know what the exact dose of the alkaloid in each powder is. The proportion, I believe, as a rule varies between 0.2 and 0.5 per cent., which would give from $\frac{1}{30}$ rd to $\frac{1}{15}$ th of a grain of strychnine in each powder.¹

I can find no account of the treatment of hydrophobia by strychnine in the books at my disposal, unless we except curara which was at one time used as a remedy in this terrible disease; a species of *strychnos* is said to be a potent element in its composition. The narcotic and sudorific properties spoken of above seem also to be unknown at the present time, yet curiously enough the writer of the article "Nux Vomica" in "Chambers's Cyclopædia" of the year 1786, the four volumes of which I possess, lays greater stress on these than he does on its poisonous properties. He states that "they are of a strong narcotic quality so as to be ranked in the number of poisons." After describing the round, flat, grey, mouse-coloured seeds he states that "Hermannus, botanic professor at Leyden, who has written expressly on it, says that the *vomic nuts* of Timor and Ceylon are for the human species excellent sudorifics, and are also to be ranked among diuretic medicines. Fallopius relates that it was given with success in the plague; that in doses from a scruple to half a drachm it procured a plentiful sweat, in which case the patient recovered." But no mention of its use in hydrophobia is made in this article nor in the one devoted to the description and treatment of that disease. I have also consulted several authorities on China and though the drug certainly finds a place amongst native medicines I can find no reference to its use in this disease nor that it is at all used by native practitioners, at least in this part of China. Some of the symptoms of hydrophobia

¹ Fleet Surgeon Thorpe inclosed one uncrushed seed and one crushed. The powdered nut weighed 0.925 gramme and the uncrushed nut 1.270 grammes, the total weight being 2.195 grammes. The two when extracted gave 2.60 per cent. of mixed alkaloids. Allen states: "The alkaloids in powdered commercial *nux vomica* ranged from 2.56 to 3.57 per cent." The alkaloids extracted gave the characteristic reaction of brucine and strychnine, the former being in decided excess.—ED L.

bear a certain resemblance to those of poisoning by strychnine and it would therefore almost appear as though the principle of *similia similibus curantur* has been applied by the Chinese in this case. There is no doubt that in regard to other remedies they have a firm belief in this doctrine.

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ALIENS, DIRT, AND DISEASE.

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IN the debate on the Aliens Bill in the House of Commons on April 25th the Right Hon. James Bryce is reported as saying "that evidence and statistics alike went to show that Russian and Polish Jews were generally healthier than English workers, especially in regard to contagious diseases."¹ I notice that Mr. Bryce is reported in the same terms by the *Daily Mail*; since such redoubtable antagonists as the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily News* are agreed on the matter we may take it that Mr. Bryce did utter this opinion. Recently I have made an investigation into the influence of such factors as age, sex, and social conditions on the incidence of disease of the eye. I shall here give my results as far as the influence of social conditions is concerned.

ALIENS AND NATIVES.

By the permission of Mr. W. T. Holmes Spicer I have examined all the letters of new patients attending his clinic at the Royal London Ophthalmic Hospital for the year 1902. The clinic is one of 12 and it is held on Wednesdays and Saturdays. On Wednesdays the proportion of alien patients to native is 1 in 30 and on Saturdays it rises as high as 1 in 3. The patients numbered 2751. Of these I find 2124 were natives and 627 were aliens. The separation was made by the indication afforded by the names of patients, experience teaching one to distinguish readily alien names; doubtful cases were classed with natives, so that this allowance and the known tendency of aliens to adopt local names imply that the number of aliens has been rather under-estimated. The classification of the patients stands thus:—

Condition.	Native.	Alien.
Conjunctivitis	321	231
Trachoma	11	22
Phlyctenulæ	42	14
Blepharitis	48	63
Injuries	180	8
Refractions	1202	240
Other diseases of eye (lens, uvea, &c.) ...	320	49

These figures suggest at a glance that aliens suffer more from inflammatory conditions than do natives. The comparison may, however, be made more emphatic by the following procedure. In comparing the incidence of disease in age and sex it was found impossible directly to compare results owing to the disturbing influence of refraction cases which fall particularly heavy at certain periods of life. A "constant" was needed, some disease or group of diseases having a uniform incidence under all conditions of age, sex, or other factor. This "constant" I found in the group marked "Other diseases." The group is a heterogeneous mixture of cases that occur throughout life or in infancy, in youth, or in age alone—lenticular, uveal, fundus, or congenital cases having no connexion with conjunctival conditions—yet despite the mixture in the quality of the cases in the mass they make a fair balance of quantity for each

¹ *Daily News*, Parliamentary Reports, April 26th.